



Aruba's ONLY English newspaper

Christmas is in jeopardy for some New Englanders after storms and flooding knocked out power

By PATRICK WHITTLE, LISA RATHKE and MICHAEL CASEY
Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) —

Megan Michaud and her family of five lost power for three days after a powerful storm throttled her home state of Maine, and a new challenge is creeping up on her - it's almost time for Christmas. "This morning, my second grader told me, 'It's five days until Christmas' and I told myself that can't be right," said Michaud, 42, of Kennebunkport. "But it turns out the calendar keeps moving even when you're in the middle of something."

Michaud has had to toss all of the family's food. She has not wrapped a single gift and hasn't been able to start prepping Christmas dinner because of the chaos the storm has unleashed in Maine. She spent three days heating her home with a gas fireplace, shuffling back and forth from her parents' house and waiting patiently for power before it was finally restored Wednesday afternoon.



A sign is seen in the parking lot behind the Quarry Tap Room, Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023, in Hallowell, Maine.

Associated Press
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Christmas is in jeopardy for some New Englanders after storms and flooding knocked out power



Cars are flooded in a parking lot at the Hathaway Creative Center alongside the Kennebec River, Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023, in Waterville, Maine.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

It's a scene playing out all over northern New England, where the havoc wrought by an unexpectedly strong storm has made the festive season anything but.

The heavy pre-Christmas storm that hit Monday has brought dangerous flooding and widespread power outages to Maine. The aftermath of the storm has left hundreds of thousands in the dark, closed ski resorts, washed out roads, closed bridges and caused families to throw away spoiled holiday food. It's unclear when everyone will have power back, but officials and utilities in the state have said some will have to wait until the holiday.

In South Berwick, Jessica Hyland was relieved when her power finally snapped back on Wednesday morning. But she still had not been able to buy a Christmas tree and was

far behind on holiday chores. "I was on my way to mild to moderate hysteria," she said. People across the northeastern U.S. were still mopping up Wednesday after the storm dumped torrential rains and brought damaging winds from Pennsylvania to Maine, as some rivers in the region rose even higher. Some of the worst damage was in Vermont and Maine. Others, such as Ellen Briggs of Portland, were tending to the thousands of downed trees that fell in the storm. "Now there's a lot of debris to clean up," said Briggs, who had a 60-foot (18-meter) white pine collapse in her yard.

At least five people in East Coast states were killed in the storms with deaths reported in Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts and Maine. Democratic Maine Gov. Janet Mills said water levels were expected to drop in

the coming days but they remained dangerously high and posed a serious risk in many parts of the state. The Kennebec River, which runs through Augusta, and the Sandy, Swift, Carrabassett and Androscoggin rivers were all seeing higher water levels than typical, leading to damage and closures, the Maine Department of Transportation said.

Mills urged people in heavily impacted areas to avoid travel Wednesday. It was a tough blow just before the holiday, Mills said.

"It can't be ignored that this storm arrives just a few days before Christmas, a time of joy," Mills said. "For many in Maine that may no longer be the case. People dealing with the loss of their homes and damage to property." The storm hit many states, and more than 5 inches (13 centimeters) of rain fell in parts of New Jersey and

northeastern Pennsylvania. Portions of several other states got more than 4 inches (10 centimeters), according to the National Weather Service. Utility crews worked to restore power to customers after the powerful storm. Wind gusts reached nearly 70 mph (113 kph) along the New England shoreline.

Mills declared a civil state of emergency for most of Maine, noting the storm had "caused significant flooding and infrastructure damage, including to the state's federal-aid highways."

It is the kind of weather event that is becoming "the new norm" in Maine in the era of climate change and more severe storms, said Pete Rogers, director of the Maine Emergency Management Agency.

"I think we're going to see multihazard events," Rogers said. "They come out very fast, they come out very

strong. Coastal flooding, beach erosion."

Several ski resorts in Maine that were forced to close due to flooding announced they were cleaning up and planning to reopen in the coming days. Officials at Sugarloaf Mountain said they were cleaning up Wednesday and planned to open Thursday. At Sunday River ski resort in western Maine, officials said they planned to reopen Saturday. A third resort, Saddleback in Rangely, Maine, was also forced to close and planned to reopen Friday. Most of the resorts were still assessing the damage. But it was clear they were hit hard. A road leading to Sunday River Grand Summit Hotel and Conference Center washed out Monday afternoon after a brook running alongside the resort burst its banks. The Gould Academy competition center there also was filled with several feet of mud and ice.

Dirk Gouwens, executive director of Ski Maine, a nonprofit that represents ski interests in the state, said all of the 19 ski areas in the state closed or chose not to open due to the floods. The reason was not due to damage to the resorts but because access on roads to many ski areas was hampered.

"Most of the damage was done to the road infrastructure around the state, mostly due to culverts washing out, rivers overflowing their banks," Gouwens said. "The main issue is access and getting around the state. There are still tons of roads that are closed."

Some towns in Vermont, which had suffered major flooding from a storm in July, were seeing more flood damage. Five months after flooding inundated Vermont's capital, water entered the basements of some downtown Montpelier businesses as the city monitored the level of the Winooski River.

"Seeing homes and businesses surrounded by water once again has been heartbreaking," Vermont Gov. Phil Scott told reporters Tuesday. "I can't imagine the toll that has on anyone." □

Immigration fuels uptick in U.S. population growth

By **MIKE SCHNEIDER**
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The number of immigrants to the U.S. jumped to the highest level in two decades this year, driving the nation's overall population growth, according to estimates released Tuesday by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The United States added 1.6 million people, more than two-thirds of which came from international migration, bringing the nation's population total to 334.9 million. It marks the second year in a row that immigration powered population gains.

A decline in the number of deaths since the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic also contributed to the U.S. growth rate.

Population gains stem from immigration and births outpacing deaths.

After immigration declined in the latter half of last decade and dropped even lower amid pandemic-era restrictions, the number of immigrants last year bounced back to almost 1 million people. The trend continued this year as the nation added 1.1 million



This Sept. 26, 2005 photo shows a view of downtown Savannah, Ga., from Drayton Tower's northwest corner.

Associated Press

people.

The last time immigration surpassed 1.1 million people was in 2001, according to Census Bureau figures compiled by William Frey, a demographer at The Brookings Institution.

It is a sign of things to come. Without immigration, the U.S. population is projected to decline as deaths are forecast to outpace births by the late 2030s.

"The immigration piece is going to be the main

source of growth in the future," Frey said.

The census determines how many U.S. congressional seats each state gets. If trends continue through the 2030 count, California could lose four U.S. House seats and New York three. Texas could gain four seats and Florida could add three, according to an analysis by the Brennan Center for Justice.

While low by historical standards, 2023's half-percent

growth rate was a slight uptick from the 0.4% rate last year and the less than 0.2% increase in 2021.

There were about 300,000 fewer deaths this year compared with a year earlier. That helped double the natural increase to more than 500,000 people in 2023, contributing to the largest U.S. population gain since 2018, according to estimates that measure change from mid-2022 to mid-2023. The population

increased in 42 states, up from last year's 31 states.

The vast majority of growth, 87%, came from the South, a region the Census Bureau defines as stretching from Texas to Maryland and Delaware. But the concentration of growth seen during the height of the pandemic in Texas, Florida, North Carolina and Georgia diminished in 2023.

"We peaked in the movement of people to those Sun Belt hotshots," Frey said. "It's tapering off a little bit."

South Carolina's 1.7% growth rate topped all other states, and its population rose by more than 90,000 residents. More than 90% of the growth came from domestic migration, or people moving from another U.S. state to South Carolina. Without domestic and international migration, the Palmetto State would have lost population in 2023 with almost 1,300 more deaths than births.

Florida had the next-highest growth rate at 1.6%, adding more than 365,000 residents.

That was also the second-highest growth in terms of raw numbers. □

FTC proposes strengthening children's online privacy rules to address tracking, push notifications

By **BARBARA ORTUTAY**
AP Technology Writer

The Federal Trade Commission is proposing sweeping changes to a decades-old law that regulates how online companies can track and advertise to children, including turning off targeted ads to kids under 13 by default and limiting push notifications.

The federal Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, or COPPA, requires kid-oriented apps and websites to get parents' consent before collecting personal information of children under 13. COPPA was enacted in 1998, went into effect in 2000 and was last updated a decade ago.

"Kids must be able to play

and learn online without being endlessly tracked by companies looking to hoard and monetize their personal data," said FTC Chair Lina Khan in a statement. "The proposed changes to COPPA are much-needed, especially in an era where online tools are essential for navigating daily life and where firms are deploying increasingly sophisticated digital tools to surveil children."

Children's online safety advocates applauded the announcement.

"The commission's plan will limit data uses involving children and help prevent companies from exploiting their information," said Katharina Kopp, director

of policy at the nonprofit Center for Digital Democracy. "These rules will also protect young people from being targeted through the increasing use of AI, which now further fuels data collection efforts. Young people 12 and under deserve a digital environment that is designed to be safer for them and that fosters their health and well-being."

Here are some of the changes the FTC is proposing:

OPT-IN FOR TARGETED ADS

Apps, games and websites used by children would be required to obtain "separate, verifiable parental consent" to disclose information about kids under 13 to third-party advertis-

ers, unless the disclosure is "integral" to the nature of the online service. And they won't be able to deny access to the games and

apps just because parents don't agree to having their children's information disclosed which is possible today. □



A sign stands outside the Federal Trade Commission building, Jan. 28, 2015, in Washington.

Associated Press

Homeless people who died on U.S. streets are increasingly remembered at winter solstice gatherings

By ANITA SNOW

Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — With his gap-tooth smile, hip-hop routines and volunteer work for a food charity, Roosevelt White III was well known in the downtown Phoenix tent city known as “The Zone.” But like many homeless people, White suffered from diabetes and cardiovascular disease. He died unexpectedly one sweltering September day at age 36.

Thousands of people like White who died this year without a permanent home are being memorialized on Thursday in communities from Cape Cod, Massachusetts to La Crosse, Wisconsin, to Riverside, California. Established in 1990, the increasingly popular Homeless Persons’ Memorial Day is observed with prayers, candles, moments of silence and the reading of names on Dec. 21, the first day of winter and the longest night of the year. A national gathering called “One Life, Too Many. Another Year, Too Long” is planned Thursday afternoon in Washington, with a Zoom call so people can follow from afar. Other gatherings will be in Cincinnati, Ohio; Wilmington, Delaware; and San Diego. A ceremony in Phoenix will honor 758 homeless people confirmed to have died so far this year in Maricopa County, the most populous in Arizona and home to Phoenix, the state’s largest city. That’s already a record. The



Documentary photographer Eric Elmore displays one of his images of Roosevelt White III, Tuesday, Dec 19, 2023, in Phoenix at the site of a fire where Roosevelt lived in his tent.

Associated Press

Maricopa County Medical Examiner investigated 732 deaths of homeless people in 2022, representing a 42% jump in deaths from 2021. “Without sufficient housing and services, people will continue to die on the streets,” said Lisa Glow, CEO at Central Arizona Shelter Services, which operates the state’s largest emergency shelter, a 600-bed facility in Phoenix.

Deborah Gilbert White, the public education director for the National Coalition for the Homeless, said learning about those who died can shatter stereotypes. At one event several years ago,

she learned of a 3-year-old homeless girl who died in the nation’s capital.

“Meanwhile, as our overall population is growing older, we are seeing more homeless people dying in their 60s,” said White. She noted that many older homeless people with chronic conditions like diabetes don’t have the necessary conditions, such as refrigeration for insulin, to care for their health.

Overall, homelessness is surging. The recent Annual Homeless Assessment Report from the Department of Housing and Urban Development showed that

roughly 653,100 people in the United States were experiencing homelessness. That’s a 12% overall increase over the previous year and the highest since reporting began in 2007.

“A lot of people living in encampments are uninsured and without access to medical treatment for a variety of illnesses that are exacerbated by living unsheltered,” said Etel Haxhij, a spokesperson for the National Healthcare for the Homeless Council.

The council supports the remembrance events to push for better tracking of the deaths.

Maricopa County is among few U.S. jurisdictions engaged in such tracking.

Drug and alcohol abuse figured into many deaths and was often the main cause. While a stroke killed White, methamphetamine intoxication contributed to his death, according to the medical examiner. Cardiovascular events like strokes and heart attacks, followed by traffic injuries, are also common ways that homeless people die.

Many homeless people are estranged from family, which means their deaths can pass virtually unnoticed. But when White died, at least 60 people, including family members from Arizona and Oklahoma, showed up for his funeral. The food was catered by Feed Phoenix, the nonprofit organization he volunteered with.

Among the mourners was Phoenix documentary photographer Eric Elmore, who created numerous black and white portraits of White over a year. The downtown encampment where White lived once housed hundreds of people in tents, but has since been cleared out under a court order.

“He had this kind of energy that would just draw you in,” Elmore said of White. “He had a huge personality.”

Megan Kepler, who volunteered with White, remembered him on Wednesday as “a man who was full of kindness and joy.” □



New York Attorney General Letitia James speaks to the media, Nov. 6, 2023, in New York.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York’s attorney general filed suit Wednesday against SiriusXM, accusing the satellite

New York sues SiriusXM, accusing company of making it deliberately hard to cancel subscriptions

radio and streaming service of making it intentionally difficult for its customers to cancel their subscriptions.

Attorney General Letitia James’ office said an investigation into complaints from customers found that SiriusXM forced subscribers to wait in an automated system before often lengthy interactions with agents who were trained in ways to avoid accepting a request to cancel service.

“Having to endure a lengthy

and frustrating process to cancel a subscription is a stressful burden no one looks forward to, and when companies make it hard to cancel subscriptions, it’s illegal,” the attorney general said in a statement.

The company disputed the claims, arguing that many of the lengthy interaction times cited in the lawsuit were based on a 2020 inquiry and were caused in part by the effects of the pandemic on their operations. The compa-

ny said many of its plans can be canceled with a simple click of a button online.

“Like a number of consumer businesses, we offer a variety of options for customers to sign up for or cancel their SiriusXM subscription and, upon receiving and reviewing the complaint, we intend to vigorously defend against these baseless allegations that grossly mischaracterize SiriusXM’s practices,” Jessica Casano-Antonellis, a company spokeswoman,

said in a statement.

The attorney general’s office cited affidavits in which customers complained of long waits in an automated system to chat with an agent, only to endure lengthy attempts to keep their business. It takes subscribers an average of 11.5 minutes to cancel by phone, and 30 minutes to cancel online, although for many subscribers it takes far longer, the attorney general’s office said. □

U.N. Security Council again delays vote on Gaza aid resolution amid talks on wording to avoid U.S. veto

By EDITH M. LEDERER

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) —

The U.N. Security Council again on Wednesday delayed a vote on a new U.N. resolution on desperately needed aid to Gaza until the following day as the Biden administration struggles to change key wording in high-level negotiations seeking to avoid a U.S. veto.

The United States seeks to change the text's references to a cessation of hostilities in the Israel-Hamas war, and the part about putting the United Nations in charge of inspecting trucks to ensure they are actually carrying humanitarian goods, which Israel opposes.

Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates, which sponsored the Arab-backed resolution, said very high-level discussions are taking place to try to reach agreement on a text that can be adopted.

"Everyone wants to see a resolution that has impact



Humanitarian aid trucks enter through the Kerem Shalom crossing from Israel into the Gaza Strip on Monday, Dec. 18, 2023.

and that is implementable on the ground," she told reporters after the 15 council members held closed consultations. "We believe today, giving a little bit of space for additional diplomacy, could yield positive results."

Nusseibeh said the UAE is

going to be optimistic and try to reach an agreement, but if the negotiations yield no results by Thursday, "then we will assess in the council to proceed at pace to a vote on the resolution."

The vote initially postponed for Monday and

then pushed back to Tuesday and then Wednesday is now expected on Thursday morning.

The initial text called "for the urgent suspension of hostilities to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access, and for urgent steps towards a sustainable

cessation of hostilities." It also calls for U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to quickly establish a mechanism for exclusive U.N. monitoring of aid deliveries to Gaza bypassing the current Israeli inspection of aid entering the territory.

U.S. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby also raised two other issues Wednesday morning that are not in the Arab-sponsored resolution: condemnation of Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 incursion into southern Israel that sparked the latest war.

"It's important for us, if the Security Council is going to speak on this, that there's a condemnation of Hamas and what they did on the 7th of October, there's a recognition of the need for Israel to be able to defend itself, and there's of course, significant commitment by all members on getting humanitarian assistance into the people of Gaza," Kirby told reporters aboard Air Force One as President Joe Biden was enroute to Wisconsin. □

Associated Press

Three of the biggest porn sites must verify ages to protect kids under Europe's new digital law

By KELVIN CHAN

AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Three of the world's biggest porn websites face new requirements in the European Union that include verifying the ages of users, the 27-nation bloc said Wednesday, expanding the reach of its digital law designed to keep people safe on the internet.

Pornhub, XVideos and Stripchat have now been classed as "very large online platforms" subject to more stringent controls under the Digital Services Act because they each have 45 million average monthly users, according to the European Commission, the EU's executive branch.

They are the first porn sites

to be targeted by the sweeping Digital Services Act, which imposes tough obligations to keep users safe from illegal content and dodgy products.

Violations are punishable by fines of up to 6% of global revenue or even a ban on operating in the EU. Some 19 online platforms and search engines have

already been identified for stricter scrutiny under the DSA, including TikTok, Amazon, Facebook, Instagram, Google and more.

Pornhub disputed its status as a very large online platform under the DSA, referring to a statement on its website saying it has 33 million average monthly users. XVideos and Stripchat did not respond to requests for comment.

The law includes provisions to protect children by preventing them "from accessing pornographic content online, including with age verification tools," the commission said in a press release. France, Germany and Britain and U.S. states including Utah and Texas have drafted laws requiring

porn sites to verify a user is 18 or older. Methods could include checking credit cards or government-issued ID or scanning faces to estimate ages, but all those systems have raised concerns about privacy and discrimination.

Europe's digital law also calls for measures to curb the risk of spreading illegal content online, such as child sexual abuse material, or content that breaches "fundamental rights" like privacy, such as "non-consensual" images or deepfake porn.

"These measures can include adapting their terms and conditions, interfaces, moderation processes or algorithms, among others," the commission said. □



European Union flags wave in the wind as pedestrians walk by EU headquarters in Brussels, on Sept. 20, 2023.

Associated Press

U.N. votes unanimously to start the withdrawal of peacekeepers from Congo by year's end

By EDITH M. LEDERER

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The Security Council on Tuesday voted unanimously to start the withdrawal of the U.N. peacekeeping force from Congo before the end of the year as the conflict-ridden country prepares to elect its next president on Wednesday.

The resolution adopted by the U.N.'s most powerful body orders "the gradual, responsible and sustainable withdrawal" of the peacekeeping mission, known as MONUSCO, starting in South Kivu in eastern Congo, and the gradual handover of its responsibilities to the Congolese government. In a speech to the U.N. General Assembly in September, Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi, who is running for re-election against about 20 candidates, called for an accelerated withdrawal of the 15,000 peacekeepers. He has said "the phased withdrawal of the U.N. mission must be responsible and sustainable."

Congo's Foreign Minister



A Jordanian UN peacekeeper stands guard outside a newly-established base camp in the town of Bunagana, outside of which both Congolese army and rebel forces have set up positions, in Congo, Wednesday, May 16, 2012.

Associated Press

Christophe Lutundula and the U.N.'s top official in Congo, Bintou Keita, signed agreements on Nov. 21 to end the presence of U.N. peacekeepers after more than two decades in the Central African nation.

Eastern Congo has long

been overrun by dozens of armed groups seeking a share of the region's gold and other resources. Some have been quietly backed by Congo's neighbors. U.N. experts have noted "substantial evidence" that Rwanda is supporting the

resurgent M23 rebel group, which Rwanda has denied. In October, the Congolese government directed an East African regional force, deployed last year to help end the fighting, to leave the country by December. The government alleged a

"lack of satisfactory results on the ground."

MONUSCO's primary mission has been the protection of civilians. But frustrated Congolese say that no one is protecting them from rebel attacks, leading to protests against the U.N. mission and others that have at times turned deadly. The Security Council said in Tuesday's resolution that the withdrawal from South Kivu should be completed by the end of April 2024, and expressed readiness to consider further withdrawals at the end of this phase based on progress in the U.N. disengagement plan and the situation on the ground. The council extended the mandate for MONUSCO until Dec. 20, 2024 and decided that its troop ceiling until June 30, 2024 should be 13,500 military personnel, 660 military observers and staff officers, and 2,001 international police. It ordered a reduction from July 1, 2024 to 11,500 military personnel, 600 military observers and staff officers and 1,713 international police. □

Suriname's ex-dictator sentenced to 20 years in prison for the 1982 killings of political opponents

By GEROLD ROZENBLAD

Associated Press

PARAMARIBO, Suriname (AP) — Suriname's former dictator Desi Bouterse was sentenced on Wednesday

to 20 years in prison for the murders of 15 opponents of the then-military regime in December 1982, ending a historic 16-year legal process.



In this Aug. 12, 2010 file photo, Suriname's President Desi Bouterse attends a military parade after his swearing-in ceremony in Paramaribo, Suriname.

Associated Press

Bouterse, 78, was previously sentenced in the case in 2019 and in 2021 but had appealed both decisions. The court on Wednesday upheld his conviction and the latest sentencing was seen as final with no more appeals allowed. The judge handed down 20 years given the ex-president's age and that it was the highest sentence allowed at the time of the killings.

"We have received a gem of a verdict," said Hugo Essed, lawyer for the victims' relatives, adding that he can now "proudly" say there is an independent constitutional state in Suriname.

Neither Bouterse, nor his four co-suspects, who were sentenced to 15 years in

prison, were present in the courtroom for the sentencing.

Bouterse's lawyer, Irvin Kanhai, said he disagreed with the verdict and had expected an acquittal, but would go into detail at a later date. "I am going to my client now," he told journalists.

The former president remains chair of the National Democratic Party and some fear unrest in parts of Suriname. Die-hard supporters call him "boss" and have maintained they will not accept a conviction. Bouterse has urged calm several times. Tight security measures were in place in part of the capital of Paramaribo.

Bouterse still has the option

of requesting a presidential pardon, but according to Essed, the legislation in Suriname is unclear on the issue. "If a request for clemency is made, it is not expected that the Court will advise on granting it."

Henk Kamperveen, the son of Andre Kamperveen, one of the 15 people killed, said it took a long time, but the legal process against Bouterse has finally come to an end.

"We're not going to celebrate," he added, saying it is not a victory for the relatives, but for the rule of law in Suriname.

Prosecutors had demanded the immediate imprisonment of Bouterse, but the judge did not back the request. □

Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Marriott's Surf Club!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Distinguished Visitors of Aruba. These honorees were respectively honored with certificates acknowledging their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)



The honorees were:

Distinguished Visitors of Aruba
Mr. Adam & Mrs. Rachael Katof
from New York, United States.

Distinguished Visitor of Aruba
Mr. Jesse Katof, son of Mr. & Mrs. Katof.

Ms. Kimberley Richardson representing the Aruba Tourism Authority,

and staff members of the Marriott's Surf Club bestowed the certificates to the honorees, presented them with memorable gifts, and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their best-loved vacation destination, as their home away from home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the honorees were:

- Aruba's great weather.
- Aruba's friendly people
- Aruba's beautiful beaches.
- Aruba's restaurants.
- "Aruba is our home away from home."

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island".

Ayo & Casibari: Aruba's famous rock formations



and peace.

(Oranjestad)—The Ayo and Casibari Rock Formations are known locally as one of the crucial sites to have in your "off-road" trip itinerary. These naturally formed rock formations as just one of the few places on the island that hold a rich history of our culture and of our ancestors.

Ayo

The Ayo Rock Formation is located in the northern part of the island, right on the road that leads you to the Black Stone Beach, and close to the Natural Bridge. The Ayo is a fenced

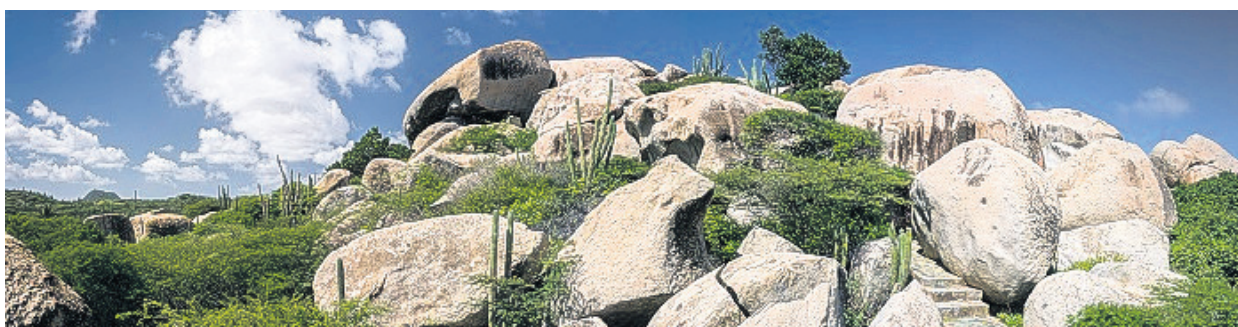
terrain that consists of several giant boulders, resting neatly on top of or side by side each other, adding gorgeous natural architecture to the surrounding "mondi". This is also one of the few sites to contain prehistoric markings of our indigenous ancestors. The Ayo Rock formation contains stairs that lead you to the top of the highest boulder, offering a breath-taking view of the Aruban backyard. The Ayo is usually quiet, as it is situated farther away from the busier parts of the island. However, this is just another charm of the site: the quiet area and the refreshing breeze offer a sense of comfort

Casibari

Probably the busier rock formation site, the Casibari is situated more in the center of the island, much closer—and more accessible—to the general public. Just like Ayo, Casibari is a fenced area containing several boulders that lay on top or lean on each other. The best aspect of the Casibari Rock Formation is the accompanying view when you climb up the top of the round, flat bolder. For this position, you can see the majority of the island and the ocean in the south. Right in front of the entrance, there is the Casibari Café and Grill, a great place to get refreshments and snack before continuing your off-road adventure!

Both sites are open free to the public, 24 hours a day. However, unless you are taking a trip with a professional tour guide, there are no guides at the sites to help you climb the rock. So, do be careful when trudging on the boulders, and make sure to befriend any roaming goats you see along the way!

*Mondi: what we call our Aruban wilderness. We don't have forests, or deserts, but we do have mondi!



Papillon: The butterfly effect of magnificent food



PALM BEACH — Do you remember the film “Papillon” starring Steve McQueen? Papillon restaurant is the island’s example where ‘life imitates art.’ The décor, especially the restrooms, was inspired by the movie. For

more than a decade this restaurant has built a reputation with the fusion of classic French cuisine, Dutch and Caribbean flavors. Welcome in the world of wonders where ambiance, taste and service come together

and you feel you are being welcomed in the home of the owner and her team.

“We find it really important that our guests have fun; can relax while listening to live music while their taste buds are being tickled by France, The Netherlands and the Caribbean. We offer a unique fusion of dishes and a night not to forget,” says owner Tina. As our special guest you can choose to dine inside our heartwarming airconditioned restaurant or we also offer outside dining on a cozy, elegant terrace with great ambiance of the surroundings. Perfect setting for an enjoyable time people watching while sipping on a delicious cocktail.

Fresh oysters, caviar and wild boar

You are on vacation, life is to enjoy! If you want something special, a different flow than the usual, then Papillon is the place to go. Foodies are in heaven here with classic French dishes such as Foie Gras, Frog Legs, fresh Oysters coming in on a weekly basis from Holland, Escargots, Dover Sole à la Meunière flown in from Europe and filleted at the table, Duck Breast seared on the skin, roasted and braised Lamb in Balashi beer and slow braised Wild Boar Shank. Do not leave without trying the exclusive recommendation: Caviar! All of this combined with an extensive wine list from around the world makes Papillon a must-do on your Aruban vacation.



Let the music play!

Another reason to visit us is our Live Entertainment Schedule all through the week.

Get all cozy and warmed up on Sundays and Mondays by Marisella and her enchanting acoustic tunes accompanied by percussion only.

On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, Jairo will give you a real Saxophone treat while on Wednesday you can sit back, relax and enjoy your dinner while DJ Jason brings you the most smooth jazz and lounge music for a dreamy night.

The musicians interact with the guests & requests can be sent in. The live tunes definitely add to the experience.

Vegetarian vibes present Impressive vegetarian/vegan dishes are set up especially for the guests by the chef and Meredith from Vegan Aruba. “We offer vegan choices that are really good and tasty. Our daily soup is always vegan too”. What are you waiting for, make sure to pay a visit to this elegant yet laid-back restaurant while on Aruba. You are most welcome!

Chef’s Garden 6 course dinner by Papillon

Our one of a kind executive chef Juan Ludena gets extra creative outside the kitchen of Papillon Restaurant. Serving a 6 course surprise menu featuring his International flavors and creativity with refined dishes, chef Juan Ludena is determined to give you a night to remember. Wine pairing is optional. The chef’s secret garden is located in a local replica of the Aruba traditional ‘cunucu’ house. The tropical garden is the setting for a magical in-home private dining experience.

For more information about this magnificent option, please send us an email or ask our wait staff. Papillon Restaurant is located at The Village across the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino and within walking distance of all other major hotels.

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Aruba Tourism Authority honors loyal visitors at Marriott's Ocean Club!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Emerald Ambassadors of Aruba. This lovely couple was honored with a certificate acknowledging their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:

Emerald Ambassadors of Aruba
Mr. Antoine & Mrs. Vera Chaker
from New Jersey, United States.

Ms. Kimberley Richardson representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of the Marriott's Ocean Club bestowed the certificate to the honorees, presented them with memorable gifts, and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their best-loved vacation destination, as their home away from home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the honorees were:

- "Aruba is our home away



from home."

- Aruba's nice sandy beaches.
- Aruba's Marriott's Ocean Club.
- Aruba's shopping.
- "Friends we have made over the years."

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island". ☐

Aruba's most family-friendly beaches

(Oranjestad)—One of the biggest concerns that parents have when travelling with their children is a guarantee of their safety and healthy enjoyment. Therefore, we thought it would be a great help to travelling parents to list off some the most family-friendly beaches around the island.

Baby Beach in San Nicolas

Baby Beach is one Aruba's most popular and visited beaches, and for good reason: This sandy and quiet lagoon is a great place for parents to sit back and relax while their children play in the shallow shores of the beach. Beside the relaxing atmosphere, there are also several services that may accommodate your stay, like a parking lot, sun tent rentals, chairs, bathrooms and a snack bar right at the far left of the beach.

Mangel Halto in Pos Chiquito

Mangel Halto is situated in the back streets of the Pos Chiquito city. Though there are several stairs on the sides of the beach cliff leading you down, the best spot for

families to hang out is across the bridge, passed the mangrove trees near the entrance sign. Here, there are small and big palapas, perfect for big and small families to set up their belongings. In this area, the shore is also shallow, falling right around your knee before slowly getting deeper: perfect for kids to safely play.

Eagle Beach/Palm Beach in the hotel area

Yet another highly popular beach site, Eagle Beach and Palm Beach is where most of our visitors go to tan, swim or play in the white sand. Because they are near the low-rise and high-rise hotel areas, these beaches are the most accessible for visitors on foot. These beaches also offer many palapas free to use, but you can also rent chairs and tents. Much like Baby Beach, these sites are one of the best beaches for your children to play and build sand castles.

Boca Catalina in Malmok

Boca Catalina is a small bay beach near

the Malmok beach area further down the hotel areas. Though it may not be a very sandy beach, it is relatively quiet and tranquil. This is a great place for family to lay down a big blanket and have a little picnic. This is also one of the best places to snorkel, as this area is filled with little fish and corals, even close to the shore.

Palm Island

Ok, this one is technically not a beach, but a must-visit attraction for family fun. This small water park oasis is located further down the Mangel Halto Beach and is reachable by boat. This water park offers 6 hours of fun activities, food, drinks, and a chance to see pink flamingoes up close! ☐

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Did you know about...

Basic driving rules on Aruba (part 2)

(Oranjestad)—In Yesterday's issue, we've provided some basic rules when driving on the four-lane highways and roundabouts on the island. Today, we want to offer you more tips and tricks when it comes to driving on the roads and highways of Aruba.

Speed limit in certain areas

As mentioned in yesterday's issue, the legal minimum and maximum speed limit on the island is 50 and 80 km/h respectively. However, there are some areas where it is mandated to drive up to a certain speed. This is always indicated by a circular traffic sign with red border and the number 50 on it. Signs like these are always paired

by a similar sign with the number crossed out further down the road. This means that the mandate for this speed is now over; you may increase your velocity. Red borders on traffic sign—whether it's a circle or triangle—usually signal a warning, prohibition or preference.

Besides the "50" sign, you may also

encounter a traffic sign that says "bebouwde kom". These can be found in San Nicolas and Oranjestad. Bebouwde kom signs are rectangular and blue, and essentially tell you that you are in a heavily inhabited area. The maximum speed limit in a bebouwde kom is 50 km/h. Just like the previous pair, bebouwde kom signs are also paired with a similar sign crossed out.

Priority signs

On the main roads of Aruba (not the highways), you may see a yellow, squared sign with a white border. This sign tells you that on this road, you have priority and all other traffic should yield to you. This sign can be seen in Savaneta for example. So, if you are driving on the main road in Savaneta going to San Nicolas, you are driving on a single long road, and other cars that want to get on this main road or cross it, either from an intersection or from a dirt road, must all wait until traffic on the main road is clear. In other words, you do not have to stop for them. This sign too has a counter part that indicates that your priority is over.

Another priority sign you may encounter is a triangle sign with a red border and something that looks like a cross. You'll see this sign in an intersection. The general rule of thumb for crossing an intersection that do not contain traffic lights, roundabouts, sign or arrows on the road, is to always yield for traffic on your right. However, if you encounter this sign on your side of the intersection, you have priority over the other cars, even the one on your right.

However, be careful not to confuse this sign with a similar up-side down triangle, also found on intersections. This sign is a prohibition sign, telling you that you have to stop and give other cars priority. Of course you also have a "stop" sign that mean the same thing. The stop sign is generally used for tricky intersections with minimal view of opposite incoming traffic.

These are some of the basic rules that you would have to know if you decide to drive on the island. These are of course other traffic signs, and we recommend you visit aruba-travelguide.com for an extensive overview of all traffic signs used on Aruba. □

Picture credits: aruba-travelguide.com



bebouwde kom



end bebouwde kom



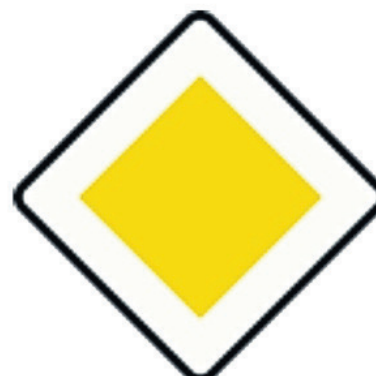
end priority



end speed limit



intersection priority



priority



speed limit



stop sign



triangle stop sign

Aruba's cultural and literary development: Then and now

(Oranjestad)—The Aruban culture has seen many substantial developments over the course of a century. With the introduction of the Lago Refinery at the turn of the 20th century, followed by the breakout of the Second World War and the general incentive for political independence during the mid-century, a cultural identity on the island began to take form and have since developed through international and local influences.

In the pre-industrial era of the 19th century, much could not be said about a cultural identity on the island. Still being a part of a Dutch colonial territory at the time, as well as not having political or economic autonomy (Curacao was the center of commerce, cultural life, and political management of the Netherland Antilles at the time), the small population of Aruba consisted mostly of farmers and fishermen, tending to their crops and their cattle, or going out to fish to provide for their family. As Quito Nicolaas states in his article *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* (Literary History of Aruba: Cultural Life), "during the pre-industrial period, there were no significant economic activity that could have created a cultural ambience, with only one way to generate profit at the time for the subsistence of Aruban families."

It wasn't until the introduction of the Lago Refinery in San Nicolas in 1928, that the island saw a small boom in cultural manifestations and entertainment,



as farmers left the 'cunucu' (country) life to work in the refinery, which resulted in Aruba acquiring a different economic pillar. Before this, entertainment and cultural manifestations were mostly experienced by local parishes and the island's elite, who often partook in cultural and entertaining activities around the island, like going to the movie theater or coming together to share poetry on Sundays

after church.

Literary life

Throughout the 19th century and up until the 1940s, there were also not much trace of a cultural climate for the cultural-literary sector on the island. Primary education was introduced on the island in the mid-19th century, followed by secondary and higher education around the late 30's and 40's. It wasn't until the



1950s, with the introduction of the E.R.N.A agreement in 1951 and the signing of the Statute in 1954, which allowed more space for and control over the economic and cultural development of Aruba, that the literary life on the island began to grow substantially compared to decades before. This was in response to local institutions established in the 1940s for cultural and literary growth on the island, but that did not yet capture the attention of the general public. The 1950 brought with it a boom of literary production on the island, like those of V.S. Piterella, as well as migrant authors José Ramón Vicioso y Rings William Rufus, who have also contributed to the literary development on the island. The literary movement was further promoted by local broadcasters Voz di Aruba and Radio Kelboom, with

their regular broadcast of literary works.

The 50s and 60s also saw the influence of international cultures, especially that of the United States. During this time, because of international influences as well as the continued prosperity of the oil refinery, cultural traditions in Aruba began to really take form and become widespread, as different worldly and local concepts were introduced in the Aruban society. With the establishment of local television broadcast station Tele-Aruba in 1963, and with time and possibilities, local programs such as "Nos Tera" ("Our Land") started to pay more attention to the Aruban culture and worked to form a cultural consciousness within the community. The 1960s also saw the rise of local authors and artists, who were more comfortable in producing works in our native tongue, Papiamentu, but who also produced works in Spanish, English and Dutch. This new phenomenon was in response to the interaction between economic growth, individual prosperity, cultural life and literary expression.

The 21st century

Nowadays, international influence on our culture is still prevalent, especially those from Latin America, the United States and The Netherlands. Nevertheless, there also exists a strong cultural identity and traditions that are exclusive to the Aruban culture, often manifesting during traditional celebrations, like Dia di San Juan/ Dera Gai (St. John's Day), Dia di Himno y Bandera (National Hymn and Flag Day), Camping during Easter and much more. With the surge of social media in the last decade, artistic voices, especially those of the younger generation, has become even more prevalent and easily accessible to the community of Aruba through online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. Source: *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* by J.R. "Quito" Nicolaas



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

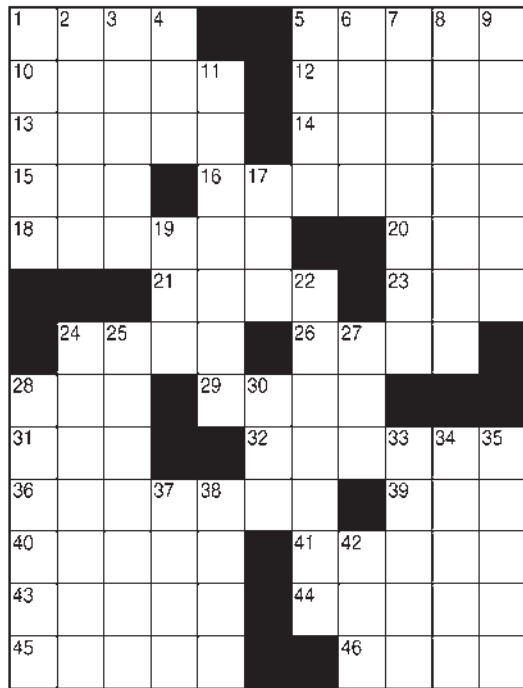
- 1 Lot unit
- 5 Shiny finish
- 10 Hitching tool
- 12 Sold for
- 13 Slow tempo
- 14 Fighting words
- 15 "Exodus" hero
- 16 England's Churchill
- 18 Cold time
- 20 Galoot
- 21 Inkling
- 23 Obtain
- 24 Source of cents
- 26 Call for
- 28 La Brea stuff
- 29 Painter Dix
- 31 Musician Yoko
- 32 Target for Jack Frost
- 36 Painter Homer
- 39 Skating surface
- 40 Gladden
- 41 Island greeting
- 43 Type a password, perhaps
- 44 Contract add-on
- 45 Cleaned, in a way

DOWN

- 1 Attorney follower
- 2 Dear, in Dijon
- 3 Quarrel
- 4 CPR pro
- 5 Amused look
- 6 Back muscles
- 7 Facing the audience
- 8 Bent over
- 9 Bard's work
- 11 Greeted deferentially
- 17 Hot blood
- 19 Pewter component
- 22 Dove's stance
- 24 "Mandy" singer
- 25 It began about 1000 B.C.
- 27 Long, long time
- 28 Locker room
- 30 Tango need
- 33 Radio part
- 34 Earthy color
- 35 Tired
- 37 Word on an octagon
- 38 Given for a time
- 42 Tyler of "Armageddon"



Yesterday's answer



AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-21

CRYPTOQUOTE

Q O G S L Z W N D S A Q J ' X L S Q
J L Q G A G N Q G F J L J N O S A N G
A Y V I L M . Q O Y Q ' N P G V Y B N G J
F S L ' Q R L S H Q O G O S A N G N
D G A N S L Y Z Z W . — L Y Q R J L M
V S Z G

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: SNOWFLAKES ARE PRETTY PATTERNS ETCHED IN WATER'S DREAMS. — ANTHONY T. HINCKS

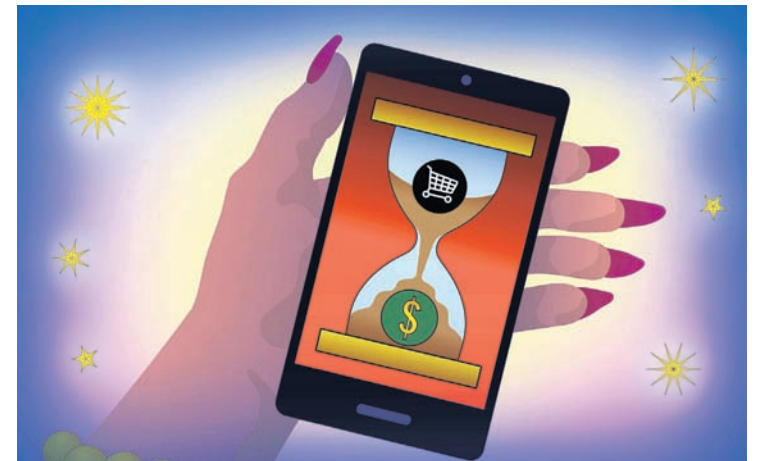
Klarna CEO Siemiatkowski says buy now, pay later is used by shoppers who otherwise avoid credit

By KEN SWEET
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Sebastian Siemiatkowski is a co-founder and CEO of Klarna, the Sweden-based company that's one of the world's biggest providers of buy now, pay later services to customers. Klarna started off in Europe and entered the U.S. market in 2015.

Buy now, pay later has become an increasingly popular option for consumers for purchases: its usage is up 10-fold since the pandemic and U.S. regulators see it as potentially a more sustainable way for borrowers to pay for purchases instead of using credit cards.

Siemiatkowski spoke to the AP about how popular buy now, pay later has gotten since the pandemic, why consumers are choosing it



(Associated Press Illustration/Peter Hamlin)

and how the company is using artificial intelligence software in how it hires. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: You operated in Europe for several years before coming to the U.S. What made you come here?

A: As we were considering coming to the US, we identified that there was a fairly large group of U.S.

consumers that they called self-aware avoiders, people had been burned by the bad practices of credit cards.

We found there is a fairly big audience that is preferring to use debit but occasionally want to use credit on single occasions and where buy now pay later, you know, fits them really well. □

Rite Aid banned from facial recognition tech use for 5 years after faulty theft targeting in stores

By TOM MURPHY
AP Health Writer

Rite Aid has been banned

from using facial recognition technology for five years over allegations that

its surveillance system was used incorrectly to identify potential shoplifters, especially Black, Latino, Asian or female shoppers.

The settlement with the Federal Trade Commission addresses charges that the struggling drugstore chain didn't do enough to prevent harm to its customers and implement "reasonable procedures," the government agency said.

Rite Aid said late Tuesday that it disagrees with the allegations, but that it's glad it reached an agreement to resolve the issue.

The FTC said in a federal court complaint that technology used by Rite Aid for several years led to thousands of incorrect matches, including an incident where Rite Aid store employees stopped and searched an 11-year-old girl. □



A Rite Aid sign is displayed on the facade of a store in Pittsburgh, Jan. 23, 2023.

Associated Press

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24/7

AI systems can't be named as the inventor of patents, U.K.'s top court rules

LONDON (AP) — An artificial intelligence system can't be registered as the inventor of a patent, Britain's Supreme Court ruled Wednesday in a decision that denies machines the same status as humans. The U.K.'s highest court concluded that "an inventor must be a person" to apply for patents under the current law. The decision was the culmination of American tech-nologist Stephen Thaler's long-running British legal battle to get his AI, dubbed DABUS, listed as the inven-tor of two patents. □



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Zac Efron and Lily James on the simple gesture that frames the tragedy of the Von Erich wrestlers

By **LINDSEY BAHR**
AP Film Writer

Zac Efron didn't realize how much he needed a hug. He'd transformed himself into a mass of muscle and repressed emotion to play professional wrestler Kevin Von Erich in the new film "The Iron Claw." It was a taxing role and unlike anything he'd done before, both physically and psychologically. He often found himself with real bruises from recreating fights in the ring. Downtime between shots, too, was usually spent lifting.

But he didn't appreciate how much it was affecting him until he and Lily James sat down to film the first date between his character and the woman who would marry him. Pam tells Kevin that he has oldest brother syndrome. Kevin tells her that he's not actually the oldest: That brother died in an accident when he was 6 and Kevin was 5. He says he's fine, but Pam gets out of her seat, walks around the table and drapes her arms around Kevin, who seems to melt in the warmth of a love that's not conditional.

"It felt very needed, that hug," Efron told The Associated Press in a joint interview with James. "It was the first time I'd embraced anyone in months without it being a fake punch, or someone trying to submit me or get me to tap out." Efron is half-laughing but also not. If you know anything about the Von Erichs, sometimes referred to as the Kennedys of wrestling, you know that the tragic death of the oldest brother is not the last that they would endure. In fact, the completely true account of what would transpire was too much for even the film to bear: By the time Kevin was 35 he'd have lost his four remaining brothers, three to suicide. For "The Iron Claw," in theaters Friday, writer-director Sean Durkin made the decision to take the youngest, Chris,



This image released by A24 shows Lily James, left, and Zac Efron in a scene from "The Iron Claw."

out entirely.

"The Iron Claw" is still primarily about the relationship between the brothers David (Harris Dickinson), Kerry (Jeremy Allen White) and Mike (Stanley Simons) and their father Fritz (Holt McCallany), a wrestler who dreamt of greatness for himself and his family at any cost. Kevin told Durkin that he just wanted audiences to know how much the brothers loved one another.

As a lifetime wrestling fan who grew up following the Von Erichs, who presided over the Texas wrestling scene in the 1970s and '80s, Durkin was fascinated by ideas of American masculinity, trauma and grief, as well as Kevin's relationship with Pam that somehow survived through it all.

Though Kevin had spoken a lot about his life after the deaths, there wasn't much Pam "out there," Durkin found. But instead of a hindrance, it provided an opportunity to be creative and make it personal. He'd already decided that he wanted to write and figure out the story before getting in touch with his real-life subjects.

James joined the project

a bit later than everyone else. Efron recalled a "collective jump for joy" upon finding out that she'd said yes. Though they didn't know one another beforehand, they quickly established a natural rhythm that would prove to be magic on camera and off.

"It's so nice when you meet someone at work and it just instantly kind of clicks," James said. "Zac made me feel so welcome and at home in our scenes, which are so special and effortless."

Part of that they attribute to Durkin's preference for filming long, uninterrupted takes that helped them get out of their own heads. After five minutes, Efron said, you simply forget that the camera is there. But Durkin thinks something even more special happened when it was just them.

"The second we started filming, it was like everything fell away and they were just totally present with each other and just fully responding," Durkin said. "It was really fun to watch." It's not just that you're watching two people fall in love. Pam shows Kevin a different way of living and a different kind of love than

he had known, which becomes even more essential as everything he thought he knew about life crumbles around him.

"She's a slight horse whisperer. I was really intrigued by this woman that has such emotional intelligence and directness. She's not afraid to be fragile," James said. "When Pam just goes around and hugs him, you get the feeling that he never experiences that kind of physical, gentle intimacy. It felt really moving to do that moment because she kind of knew what he needed." The hug is a cathartic moment for Kevin, who has been taught to hold back his emotions in real life.

"It was the first time that it really wasn't about winning or losing and, for Kevin, about being himself and finding meaning outside of the gym and the ring and the world of his family," Efron said.

But Efron didn't expect to feel it too.

"It was overwhelming in the best possible way," he said. "I almost didn't know how to deal with it. It felt very close to the character."

Efron's committed performance has earned him some of the highest praise

in his career. And the fact that he hadn't done anything like it before is part of the reason Durkin wanted him.

"He had the athletic background, the dance background and the physicality and those are great building blocks to being a wrestler. And he has a clear hunger for doing tough work," Durkin said. "But the ultimate thing was meeting him and seeing how kind and sweet he is as a person. It's quite a silent role in a lot of ways and having that core was crucial."

While filming, he said, "A lot of my direction to Zac was 'don't cry yet.' Even in moments where it's impossible, just hold it in and keep holding it in."

For Efron, the exploration of repressed emotions resonated. Spending time with Kevin has only helped reinforce its importance.

"I think a lot of men deal with this," Efron said. "Repressed emotion never leads to good things. It's something that I've definitely had to work on over the course of my career and life. That this movie was about that was intriguing to me. It felt personal." But it wasn't all tears and bruises. They had some genuinely fun scenes to look forward to as well, including line dancing at Kevin and Pam's wedding. "It's just the coolest thing I've ever done on camera," James said.

"You rocked that scene," Efron responded. "By the way, I didn't know you had rehearsed. I thought you just knew that dance. I was blown away, I was like, what is going on? How do you know this? Aren't you British?"

For both, the film was a "real ride" and flush with creative energy and freedom.

"It definitely rekindled something inside me," Efron said. "I'm in love with this process more than ever. I really needed it. I really did." □

Penske threeppeat a potential theme for NASCAR in 2024

By PETE IACOBELLI
AP Sports Writer

Roger Penske achieved something this season the pioneering motorports magnate had never done in his long, accomplished career with back-to-back NASCAR championships. Ryan Blaney gave Penske consecutive series titles at Phoenix last month after teammate Joey Logano's title-winning run in 2022.

"You win one, and you start all over again," Penske said. "They don't give you an extra lap ahead of everybody after you win one. Last year, Joey did a great job, and by the way when you think about it, last year at Phoenix, if you watched it, Ryan was a good wing man. He had a fast car at Phoenix, so we knew that he had the speed."

That showed throughout this past season as Blaney won three times, including twice in the playoffs and was fastest when it counted most with eight top 10 finishes in the final 12 races. Blaney was gushing after his championship after starting in a pair of Penske firsts: Winning the Coca-Cola



Roger Penske, center, speaks with drivers Joey Logano, left, and Ryan Blaney before practice for the NASCAR auto race at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Saturday, July 30, 2022, in Indianapolis.

600 to combine with Josef Newgarden's Indianapolis 500 win on Memorial Day weekend and then earning that NASCAR crown.

"You don't get to do that often, do something for Roger that he hasn't done before, and to be able to bring that to him is definitely very special," Blaney said.

Count on Blaney and Logano to go hard after a Penske three-peat when the season kicks off next season.

BANGED UP

A couple of other title contenders in Denny Hamlin and Chase Elliott will bear watching after offseason surgeries.

Hamlin had said 2023 was his year before getting eliminated from contention in the next-to-last race of the season. He had shoulder surgery in November that he said was more complicated than expected. Hamlin said it will affect offseason preparations headed into next year.

Elliott had shoulder surgery to repair a torn labrum and he believes he'll be ready for next year. He missed six races in 2023 after injuring his leg snowboarding.

A healthy Elliott should make Hendrick Motorsports as strong as ever. Past champion Kyle Larson and William Byron combined for 10 victories and finished second and third in the series standings.

TUNING IN

NASCAR fans will have several new streaming ways to watch after the sport's seven-year media rights deal that includes Amazon, TNT and Max.

The new arrangement is worth \$7.7 billion when a previously announced \$1.1 billion contract with CW is figured in, according to the Sports Business Journal. NASCAR has not detailed the contract's value.

BIGGEST SURPRISE

Roush Fenway Keselowski Racing's revival under ex-series champion Brad Keselowski, an owner who helped Jack Roush's once-great program return to prominence this season. □

U.S. Soccer Federation refuses MLS attempt to pull top rosters from U.S. Open Cup

CHICAGO (AP) — The U.S. Soccer Federation refused Major League Soccer's attempt to pull its top rosters from next year's U.S. Open Cup, the sport's oldest competition in the nation. While MLS announced in a statement at 6 p.m. EST Friday that its board of governors decided to send teams to the tournament from its third tier MLS Next Pro rosters, the USSF characterized the league's action only as a request that had been turned down.

"As we move forward, we will continue our review of the Open Cup to ensure it aligns with the U.S. Soccer strategic pillars," the USSF said in a statement Wednesday. "We remain committed to addressing the needs and concerns

of all of our members, including MLS, and other stakeholders to enhance and improve the U.S. Open Cup."

MLS issued a statement four minutes later saying it "is committed to finding a viable solution for the 2024 tournament and is working to find a pathway that addresses its goals and concerns."

"Moving forward, MLS will remain focused on increasing opportunities for up-and-coming players, a key component of the league's player development strategy that ultimately benefits the U.S. national team program."

MLS added "it believes that there are several essential goals and concerns that must be addressed in

connection with the tournament, including developing young professional players and providing them with greater opportunity to play before fans in meaningful competition in a tournament setting, prioritizing player health and safety, reducing schedule congestion for MLS clubs, and enhanced investment from U.S. Soccer."

The United Soccer League, which entered 46 of the 99 teams in this year's tournament, said in a statement: "We stand with fans across the country who want to see it remain an authentic and inclusive competition." Houston beat Inter Miami this year in the U.S. Open Cup final, earning a berth next year in the CONCACAF Champions Cup. Mi-

ami star Lionel Messi was injured and missed the match.

The U.S. Open Cup began in the 1913-14 season, and MLS started play in 1996. Since the start of MLS, the

only team not from the first tier to win the competition was the 1999 Rochester Raging Rhinos of the USL's second-tier A-League, which beat the Colorado Rapids 2-0 in the final. □



Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi attempts a penalty kick during the second half of a club friendly soccer match against New York City FC, Friday, Nov. 10, 2023, in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Associated Press

The Patriots and Packers are still seeking their 1st 100-yard games from a rusher or receiver

By **JOSH DUBOW**
AP Pro Football Writer

When it comes to getting big games from playmakers, the New England Patriots and Green Bay Packers have been lacking at a historic level.

The Patriots and Packers are the only teams in the NFL without a 100-yard receiving game from any player, with JuJu Smith-Schuster's 90 in Week 14 against Pittsburgh the high for New England and Dontayvion Wicks' 97 last week against Tampa Bay the most for Green Bay.

Compounding the issue is the fact that the Patriots and Packers also haven't gotten a single 100-yard



Green Bay Packers wide receiver Dontayvion Wicks (13) catches a pass for a first down during the second half of an NFL football game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Sunday, Dec. 17, 2023, in Green Bay, Wis.

Associated Press

rushing game from a player this season, with Rhamondre Stevenson's 98 yards the best for New England and AJ Dillon's 76 yards the top game for Green Bay.

The only other teams without a 100-yard rusher this season are Cincinnati, Denver, Washington and New Orleans.

The other 30 teams have combined for 155 performances of at least 100 yards receiving and 62 of at least 100 yards rushing.

If the Patriots and Packers don't have a player reach that mark in the final three games, it would be the first time a team failed to have a 100-yard rusher or receiver in a single game in a season of at least 16 games.

The last team that did it was the 1982 Baltimore Colts in a strike-shortened nine-game season. The last time it happened in a full season came in 1977, when Washington had no 100-yard performances in a 14-game season.

20-20 CLUB

Christian McCaffrey and Raheem Mostert have formed the rare 20-20 club this season.

The two talented running backs are tied for the NFL lead with 20 touchdowns this season, marking the seventh time two players reached that mark in the same season.

The last time it happened came in 2021, when Jonathan Taylor and Austin Ekeler each finished the season with 20 touchdowns.

Jalen Hurts is next in the NFL this season with 14 TDs, making it unlikely that 2023 will match 2005 with a record three 20-TD scorers. In that season, Shaun Alexander led the NFL with 28, followed by Larry Johnson with 21 and LaDainian Tomlinson with 20. Only one season in NFL history has had two players reach 22 touchdowns in a season, with O.J. Simpson (23) and Chuck Foreman (22) doing it in a 14-game season in 1975. □



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